

ARTICLES

After discussion *The Asbury Seminarian* Editorial Committee determined that this issue of *The Seminarian* devote itself, at least in part, to some current moral issues confronting society. The questions were prepared by Dr. Jerry Mercer, our Associate Professor of Theology and Preaching. The respondents included the editor, Dr. Harold Barnes Kuhn, our Professor of Philosophy of Religion; Mr. John C. Angelis, an attorney of Lexington, Kentucky; Dr. David A. Seamands, pastor of the local United Methodist Church and Dr. Henry Howell, Professor of Biology at Asbury College.

Their responses to these important issues are judicious and knowledgeable, commending themselves to the minds and consciences of evangelical Christians. We trust our readers will find this panel discussion informative, stimulating, and interesting.

GENERAL TOPIC: WAR AND AMNESTY

1. Does the traditional idea of a "just war" have any relevance in an age of nuclear weaponry?

DR. KUHN

Modern nuclear warfare affects materially the traditional "just war" concepts, especially the stipulation that the amount of force applied should be proportionate to the objective(s) sought. If warfare in our century could assuredly be limited to smaller, preventive types, then the norms governing "just" wars might be met.

The existence of near-absolute weapons, capable of destruction on undreamed-of scale, especially those presently in the hands of the Super-Powers, with their sharply competing interests, tends to cancel out the possibility of "justice" in warfare. Smaller wars tend to draw in the larger powers, with the very real danger that nuclear weapons, either in "preventive strike" or by miscalculation, might be employed. This peril causes one to speak with great reserve concerning any reliance in-depth upon the "just war" concept. So long as the possession of stockpiles of nuclear weapons produces restraint because of a "balance of terror", so-called brushfire wars may be conducted within "just war" limits. When and if such a restraint fails, then massive warfare would

render obsolete any kind of proportionality of means employed to ends sought.

MR. ANGELIS

Yes. No matter whether war is with "words", with "fists", with "hand weapons", or with "nuclear weapons", men must treat their enemies as brothers, yet defend their families, institutions and country against attack. Therefore, "just war" could well take place in the nuclear age.

DR. SEAMANDS

Yes, because of the "smaller", "brush-fire" wars which keep erupting in various places.

2. With regard to nuclear arms, should the United States pursue unilateral disarmament as a moral obligation, even if Communist powers refuse?

DR. KUHN

Unilateral disarmament by the United States could serve to whet the appetite of predator-states. In an imperfect world and with a citizenry of predominantly unregenerate nature, no basis exists for the expectation of Divine protection for a weak and poorly defended nation.

For an idealistic minority to seek to impose unilateral disarmament upon a nation would mean an irresponsible commitment of millions of persons to possible subjugation by brutally aggressive nations. So long as the presence of nuclear weapons serves to restrain hostile powers, this presence does bring some measure of enjoyment of freedom to our society—little as we relish the thought of "balance of terror."

MR. ANGELIS

No. Unilateral disarmament would be suicidal by the United States. God from the beginning ordained that there would be government in relation to people. Christ did not change that principle. Each government has got to be able to meet the needs of its people. Even if one demanded it upon Christian principle, the government must be strong enough to defend itself against attack by people who are openly professing to be preparing for the day when they can be strong enough to attack and overcome us.

DR. SEAMANDS

No, I believe weakness today is an invitation to evil minds.

3. Given the sometime uncontrollable results of nuclear blasts, should all nuclear testing be stopped? If so, how can this be effected and controlled?

DR. KUHN

If on-spot inspection would make it certain that the so-called Socialist powers would cease nuclear testing, it might be desirable to outlaw all such testing. But given the admitted aims of the "socialist" world to subvert or otherwise destroy free governments, it would be indefensible for the free nations to bind their own hands and permit a possible serious breakthrough in weaponry by these potentially predatory lands. Such a major breakthrough by hostile powers might precipitate a massive stroke of blackmail, by which such a power would offer our nation 48-hours to submit "or else."

MR. ANGELIS

I believe that if all nuclear tests in the world could be stopped, it would be better for humankind. However, I do not see how we can control the actions of countries such as Russia and China. Therefore, until we can be assured that other nations of the world are not testing ahead of us, we must proceed with vigilance to take advantage of our advanced technology.

DR. SEAMANDS

No.

4. With regard to the question of amnesty, to what extent is an individual bound to political action taken by the state?

DR. KUHN

Citizens need to recognize the right of a nation to make demands to sacrifice upon them, even if at times these demands may seem unjust. But the continuance of the state may and frequently does call its citizens to rise to its defense. Our nation has legal provisions for those who, for reasons of conscience, feel they cannot render military service. Those who refuse to cooperate in any way with such institutions as the draft forfeit their right, it seems to me, to exemption on the grounds of conscience.

MR. ANGELIS

I believe in the principle expounded by Jesus, "Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and give unto God the things that are God's." When our country conscripts a certain number of young men for military service, those that fall in that classification must respond to that call or otherwise pay the political penalty of the state. I do not believe that the country can afford to give amnesty to deserters.

DR. SEAMANDS

With the provisions made for the conscientious objector by our nation I see no necessity for draft-evasion and thus amnesty: the individual is not bound (except to his own conscience) and provision is made for this. If he feels that strongly about it, then he should seek another nation to live in. I do not see how we can hold a nation together any other way. So no amnesty.

5. If and when amnesty is granted, what should be the terms?

DR. KUHN

Probably **some** administration will need in the future to deal with the question of amnesty to the several classes of persons now outside the law. This includes chiefly: (1) expatriates who left the United States to avoid draft registration and induction: and (2) deserters from the uniform.

When and if amnesty is later granted, it should be clearly on **the nation's terms**, not on the terms of those to whom it is granted and who now demand it. Many who demand amnesty, for themselves or others, desire not official forgetfulness (which is what amnesty implies), but **vindication**. This would mean, if granted, a public declaration of the morality of draft-evaders and deserters and the immorality of those who served in uniform.

It seems clear that amnesty, if and when granted, should be selective, giving preference to those who can establish some valid claim to religious convictions, and possibly also to those who did answer the "call to the colors" and after some service, felt they could not continue. For those who evaded all service, it would seem that some form of useful national service should be a condition of amnesty—of a form and duration which would deprive them of the ability to claim exclusive morality for themselves.

MR. ANGELIS

If amnesty is ever granted, which I do not think should ever occur, it should only be upon the terms that these men would make themselves available for the same services that they refused to accept originally. This is almost impossible unless the country gets itself involved in a war for the purpose of having the deserters render the services from which they originally ran away.

DR. SEAMANDS

No amnesty.

6. In your opinion would the granting of amnesty offer any dangerous sanction to the idea of civil disobedience?

DR. KUHN

I assume you refer to the granting of unconditional amnesty. To this, the answer seems clearly "Yes". Unconditional amnesty would undermine the authority of a government to call its citizens to its defense. This would imperil the nation, and when known to its enemies, would encourage dangerous adventurism and even overt aggression by hostile and predatory powers.

MR. ANGELIS

Yes, this is the very reason why I cannot accept the concept of amnesty for a deserter unless the services which he will render are equal to those rendered by the young men that responded to the country's call.

DR. SEAMANDS

Yes.

7. If our government does not plan to prosecute alleged POW collaborators involved in the Vietnam conflict, why not also grant amnesty to those who refused such military service in the first place?

DR. KUHN

There is a real difference between a POW who under hard duress cooperated with an enemy who captured him, on the one hand, and a draft-resister on the other. One has undergone suffering and privation which makes his collaboration at least understandable. The other has spurned the constitutional and legal privileges to register as a conscientious objector and has thus adopted a course of action which is recognized as lawless.

MR. ANGELIS

There is quite a bit of difference, in my opinion, between an alleged POW collaborator and a deserter from military services. The alleged POW collaborator is one who has served, who was captured and put through great stress and inhuman treatment to the point where an alleged collaboration could have taken place. There is no similarity between the two.

DR. SEAMANDS

Because the POW collaborated under torture and pressure; the others had a provision available to avoid military service.

8. In your opinion, does the news media tend to promote national loyalty?

DR. KUHN

In more recent times, Yes. There was a period (in the late 'sixties) in which the media gave unconscionable and senseless publicity to those determined to undermine our nation. Self-declared advocates of violence received at that time an undeserved rostrum for the spread of their venom against the United States, frequently under circumstances which lent credibility to their outpourings of irrational hate. In more recent times, these are being left by the media to the oblivion to which their lack of any reasoned program entitles them.

MR. ANGELIS

There were times in recent years when the thought disturbed me that some of the news media were more interested in sensationalism than in national loyalty or an intelligent and fair presentation of the news. I believe that the American people need to be very alert in their acceptance of interpretations of the news, and they must be outspoken to all the news media about any alleged misrepresentation of the news, especially on such vital matters as national security and loyalty.

DR. SEAMANDS

Taken as a whole, yes.

GENERAL TOPIC: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

1. Would you approve legislation to reinstate capital punishment?

DR. KUHN

With my heart, I am opposed to capital punishment. For a number of years my head has followed this opposition, particularly as the data showed that most executions were those of one of three classes, the black, the poor, or the friendless—or a combination of these. The exposure of the uneven application of this penalty caused a reaction in our public attitudes which is not only understandable, but laudable.

Meanwhile trends have developed which make me pause. Life imprisonment is now almost a joke; those with such sentences are eligible for parole after a very few years—usually seven or eight. The amount of repetition of criminal behavior, and the number of cases of those who have killed wantonly and senselessly, and who are now under “life sentence” make us wonder: will Sirhan Sirhan (a professed hater) and Richard Speck (murderer of eight nurses) shortly be out on parole?